The Compound

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**Dystopian Fiction**

A **utopia** is a perfect world. In utopias, there are not problems like war, disease, poverty, oppression, discrimination, inequality, and so forth. The word ''utopia'' was made up from Greek roots by Sir Thomas More. In 1516, More wrote a book called *Utopia*. Depending on the Greek roots used, utopia can either mean ''no place'' or ''good place.'' Utopias have characteristics such as:

* Peaceful government
* Equality for citizens
* Access to education, healthcare, employment, and so forth
* A safe environment

A **dystopia**, on the other hand, is a world in which nothing is perfect. The problems that plague our world are often even more extreme in dystopias. Dystopia is a play on the made-up word ''utopia'' using the prefix ''dys,'' which means ''bad'' or ''difficult.'' Words like ''dysfunctional'' or ''dyslexia'' illustrate the use of this prefix. In contrast, to utopias, dystopias have characteristics such as these:

* Usually a controlling, oppressive government or no government
* Either extreme poverty for everyone or a huge income gap between the richest characters and the poorest characters
* Propaganda controlling people's minds
* Freethinking and independent thought is banned

**What is a Dystopian Society?**

An oppressed society masqueraded as a utopia through authoritative or authoritarian control in an imagined universe that are sometimes meant to address current social, political, or otherwise societal trends and issues in subtle ways.

From *Contemporary Literary Criticism:*

Dystopian literature has been characterized as fiction that presents a negative view of the future of society and humankind.  Utopian works typically sketch a future in which technology improves the everyday life of human beings and advances civilization, while dystopian works offer an opposite view.  Some common themes found in dystopian fiction include mastery of nature—to the point that it becomes barren, or turns against humankind; technological advances that enslave humans or regiment their lives; the mandatory division of people into castes or groups with specialized functions; and a collective loss of memory and history making mankind easier to manipulate psychologically and ultimately leading to dehumanization.  Critics have argued that several of the extreme historical circumstances took place during the twenty century have been conducive to the flourishing of dystopian fiction.  Such critics have noted that some of the finest dystopian works were produced during the Nazi era in Germany, during the Stalin era in Russia, in response to various wars over the decades, and as a commentary upon various totalitarian regimes.  Discussions regarding personal freedom, the role of free will, the value of individual resistance to dictatorships, and the power of technology to transform people’s lives are also typical characteristics of dystopian fiction. (1)

**What is *Not*a Dystopian Society?**

An apocalyptic (ex: *World War Z*) or post-apocalyptic (ex: *The Walking Dead*) society or world that takes place during or after a massive disaster that caused the full collapse of a society or region, often resulting in “the end of the world”.

**Characteristics of Dystopian Fiction**

* Propaganda is used to control the citizens of society.
* Information, independent thought, and freedom are restricted.
* A figurehead or concept is worshipped by the citizens of the society.
* Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance.
* Citizens have a fear of the outside world.
* Citizens live in a dehumanized state.
* The natural world is banished and distrusted.
* Citizens conform to uniform expectations. Individuality and dissent are bad.
* The society is an illusion of a perfect utopian world

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| **Characteristic** | **This exist in *The Compound*** | **Text Evidence** |
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Adapted from: <http://nimblesnotebook.tumblr.com/post/63060908609/the-dystopian-society>